

Kudos Abstract

Many family medicine and community health practitioners would like to engage in research about clinical practice or educational innovations, but they are new to research and lack straightforward resources to guide them. This article starts where most researchers really start, with an actual case or a topic. While defining the research question is critical, questions do not come to mind naturally. This article takes a very different approach for helping aspiring researchers. Using applied activities, you are encouraged to think about a specific case or cases that piqued your interest in a topic. After clarifying your topic, you will consider trying on for “fit” different research approaches that are practical for an aspiring researcher. That is, you can “try on for size” various research approaches somewhat like you might try on clothes before you make a final selection. For your topic, you will have the opportunity to think through a project using six different approaches: survey, semi-structured interviews, curriculum development, quality improvement, health policy analysis and case study research. While the question is always important, most likely someone new to research also will have a preference for the kind of research approach to use. You can compare how your problem could be addressed for each approach relative to the information needed, the kind of intervention involved, the research process involved, and the process for evaluating the findings. After trying on different approaches you may find you really don’t have a sustainable interest. But more likely, you will find a preferred approach. Then, you can develop a title, and focus your efforts on that specific research approach. By working through this article, you can really get started in research.